Original Research Article

An Assessment of English Language Anxiety among Senior High School Students and its Effect on Their Academic Achievement

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Abstract

Anxiety in communicating in a second language, especially when that language is English, can have a negative effect to the students' educational goals. A person feels nervous, worried and fearful when anxious. It is a permanent trait, and people are expected to experience it (Woodrow, 2006). Hence, the goal of this study was to investigate the relationship of English language anxiety and academic achievement. One hundred eighty randomly selected senior high school students of St. Mary's Academy of Hagonoy participated in this study. A test called Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used to measure the English language anxiety. On the other hand, a copy of the General Weighted Average (GWA) of the students was requested from the school to assess their academic achievement. The results of the study showed that fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety are the main causes of anxiety of the senior high school respondents. Eighty-four percent of the respondents had medium level of anxiety and forty-nine percent had outstanding academic achievement. To determine the relationship of the two variables, a regression analysis was employed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). The result revealed that English language anxiety exerted no significant effect on the students' academic achievement. Finally, some interventions and strategies were suggested by the researcher to reduce or eliminate English language anxiety in the classroom.

Keywords: English language anxiety, affective filter hypothesis, academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a negative human feeling. A person feels nervous, worried and fearful when anxious. Some of the symptoms of anxiety are trembling, perspiring, and quick beating of the heart. As cited in the study "Research on High School Students' English Learning Anxiety," anxiety is a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry (Cui, 2011). It is a permanent trait, and people are expected to experience it. It is defined as "a state of apprehension, a vague fear," and it is not easy to describe it simply for it comes from different sources that are associated with situations that individuals perceive threatening (Mukminin, 2015).

The term Foreign Language Anxiety started after the work of Horwitz et al. (1986) who defined anxiety as "the feeling of tension, apprehension, and nervousness associated with the situation of learning a Foreign Language". The type of anxiety experienced by the students when learning a second or foreign language is state or situational anxiety, because they experience it when they speak inside the classroom in front of their classmates and teachers. This type of anxiety is transitory, and the students can overcome it with the passage of time (Ezzi, 2012).

A great deal of research on second language anxiety was done in the past two decades. Among Filipino students, anxiety in communicating in a second language when that language is English, can have a debilitating effect and can influence students' adaptation to the target environment and their educational goals. Most people will experience language anxiety. Even though anxiety might not be the most important reason for failure or success in learning, its effects cannot be ignored.

The study is anchored on Stephen D. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis which is one of the five theories in second language acquisition. Krashen (1982) stated that affective factors (motivation, self-esteem, self-image, empathy, etc.) are like a "screen" that is influenced by emotional variables that can prevent learning. It serves as a wall between language learners and input. For instance, learners who lack motivation tend to pay less attention in class because their filter

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level is high. On the other hand, learners who are highly motivated tend to gather more input which results to them performing well in the classroom. According to the affective filter hypothesis, lack of motivation and enthusiasm can hinder the learning process and affect the learning effectiveness of the learners. When negative emotions such as anxiety and shyness are at a low level, learners could concentrate more on the input which results to the increase of learning efficiency. The feelings and attitudes of learners are important factors in the learning process.

English is the universally accepted language in the world of business, trade, and global education today. It is considered the universal language and its use in international businesses and various professions bear an imprint in international communication and understanding. English is, also, the official language of many international organizations. It is accounted as the language in diplomatic communications. It is used not only for communication between native speakers but also for non-native speakers.

Because English is the most widely-used language, it is important to learn, understand, and speak English fluently. Having good command of the English language is necessary especially when applying for jobs. International companies and even local companies are more likely to prioritize people who are fluent in English because of the power it creates as the medium of communication. Also, people who can speak English well are perceived to be more competent in the workplace. The fluency in the English language attached certain prestige and confidence on the speaker.

In current classroom situations, many students exhibit fear of speaking the English language. Speaking skill has become a critical part of the teaching and learning process; so, anxiety in speaking the English language can hinder and influence the students' performance (Woodrow, 2006).

Due to the relevance of acquiring English competency and fluency for effective communication in the world today, this study aimed to analyze the English language anxiety level of senior high school students. Furthermore, this study examined the effect of English language anxiety to the students' academic achievement.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The study is aimed at identifying the effect of the level of English language anxiety of senior high school students on their academic achievement.

Specifically, the study sets out to answer the following questions:
1. What is the level of English language anxiety of senior high school students?

2. What is the level of academic achievement of senior high school students?
3. Does the level of anxiety exert a significant effect on the academic achievement of senior high school students?
4. What intervention programs may be developed to address the level of anxiety of the students?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Methods and Techniques Used
This study is a descriptive correlation designed to find out the relationship between English language anxiety and academic achievement. The descriptive design was employed to describe the current status of the subjects in the study. The English language anxiety of the students, as well as their academic achievement, were assessed. The correlation study, on the other hand, was carried out to investigate the existence or non-existence of the relationship between the variables of the study. It was used to determine if the English language anxiety of senior high school students had a significant effect on their academic achievement.

Dudovskiy (2018), also, stated that descriptive research could be explained as a statement of affairs as they are at present with the researcher having no control over the variables.

Moreover, it may be characterized as "simply the attempt to determine, describe or identify what is, while analytical research attempts to establish why it is that way or how it came to be." As a descriptive study, this collected detailed and factual pieces of information described existing phenomena.

It systematically described the situation or area of interest factually and accurately, which allowed the researcher to carefully understand and describe the behavior of the subjects of the study.

Respondents of the Study
The respondents of this study were the 180 senior high school students of St. Mary's Academy of Hagonoy. From the larger population of 329 students, a sample of 180 students was chosen through the use of Slovin's formula with 5% margin of error to represent the whole population.

Thus, the study used the random sampling technique. Random sampling technique was used to ensure that all the members of a population had the same chance of being selected. Because the population studied was large and choosing samples by hand would be time consuming, computer-aided random sampling was utilized. Randomizer.org is a website created for researchers to easily generate random numbers.

Instrument of the Study
A test to measure English language anxiety was used in this study. This test was called Foreign

Language Classroom Anxiety Scale which was created by Horwitz in 1986. The scale demonstrated internal reliability, achieving an alpha coefficient of .93 with all items producing significant corrected item-total scale correlations.

FLCAS has three levels of anxiety: high, medium, and low level of anxiety. It consists of 33 items indicative of language anxiety. Students who scored 33 to 75 showed a low level of anxiety, those with 76 to 119 displayed a medium level of anxiety, and 120 points and above reflected a high intensity anxiety.

A five-point Likert Scale was used to rate each item: 5 for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree, 3 for Neither Agree nor Disagree, 2 for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree. Eight items measure communication anxiety (1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32), nine items for fear of negative evaluation (3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31, 33), five items for test anxiety (2, 8, 10, 19, 21), and eleven items for anxiety of English classes (4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, 28, 30).

Data Processing and Statistical Treatment
To analyze and interpret the data gathered, the following statistical measures were used:

- Mean and standard deviation of anxiety level and academic achievement of senior high school students; and
- Simple linear regression for predicting academic achievement using anxiety

The data collected were tabulated and processed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Problem # 1: The level of English language anxiety of senior high school students

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale by Horwitz (1986) consists of 33 items indicative of language anxiety experienced by the students in the classroom. A five-point Likert Scale was used to rate each item: 5 for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree, 3 for Neither Agree nor Disagree, 2 for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree. Eight items measure communication anxiety (1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32), nine items for fear of negative evaluation (3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31, 33), five items for test anxiety (2, 8, 10, 19, 21), and eleven items for anxiety of English classes (4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, 28, 30).

Table-1: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety in terms of Communication Anxiety

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1	3.38	Average
9	3.46	Average
14	2.79	Average
18	2.85	Average
24	3.78	High
27	3.40	Average
29	2.98	Average
32	3.21	Average
Average	**3.23**	**Average**

Communication anxiety division was composed of items about an individual's confidence in speaking the English language. These items include statements such as "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English language class", "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class", and "I feel confident when I speak in English language class". Among the eight items in communication anxiety, statement number 9 (I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class) ranked the highest with a mean score of 3.46, while statement number 14 (I would not be nervous speaking in the English language with native speakers) ranked the lowest with a mean score of 2.79.

Communication Anxiety got an average score of 3.23, making it the second to the highest division of language anxiety.

Table-2: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety in terms of Fear of Negative Evaluation

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
3	3.30	Average
7	3.68	High
13	3.33	Average
15	3.24	Average
20	3.56	High
23	3.59	High
25	3.19	Average
31	3.50	High
33	3.44	Average
Average	**3.43**	**Average**

Fear of Negative Evaluation mainly focused on statements about students' fear of making mistakes when speaking the English language. Item number seven (I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages that I am) got a mean score of 3.68. The said item ranked the highest among the nine statements that compose Fear of Negative Evaluation division. On the other hand, item number twenty-five (Language class move so quickly I worry about getting left behind) ranked the lowest with a mean score of 3.19.

The results of the study revealed that the main cause of students' anxiety of the English language is their fear of negative evaluation as it ranked the highest with an average score of 3.43.

Table-3: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety in terms of Test Anxiety

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
2	2.52	Average
8	3.18	Average
10	3.54	High
19	3.20	Average
21	2.72	Average
Average	**3.03**	**Average**

The items in Test Anxiety division focused on the students' anxiety of taking tests with the English language as the medium of instruction out of their fear that they would fail the examination. Item number ten (I worry about the consequences of failing my English language class) ranked the highest with a mean score of 3.54. On the other hand, item number two (I don't worry about making mistakes in language class) ranked the lowest with a mean score of 2.52.

Test Anxiety was the lowest out of the four divisions of language anxiety as it got an average score of 3.03.

Table-4: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety in terms of Anxiety of English Classes

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
4	3.05	Average
5	3.21	Average
6	3.30	Average
11	3.39	Average
12	3.69	High
16	3.38	Average
17	2.52	Average
22	2.84	Average
26	3.20	Average
28	2.98	Average
30	3.24	Average
Average	**3.16**	**Average**

The Anxiety of English Classes focused on the students' fear of taking English classes or classes that use the English language. Item number twelve (In language class, I can get so nervous when I forget things I know) ranked the highest with a mean score of 3.69, while item number seventeen (I often feel like not going to my language class) ranked the lowest with a mean score of 2.52.

Based on the results of the test, Anxiety of English Classes ranked third as it got an average score of 3.16.

Table 5
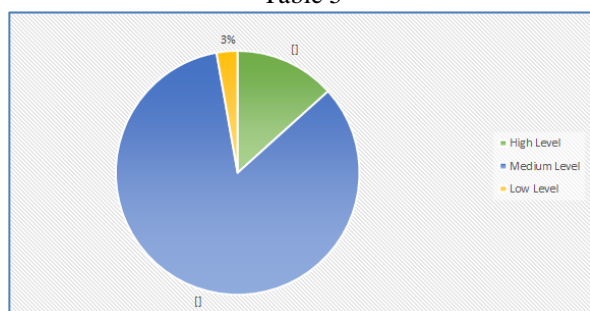
Level of English Language Anxiety of Senior High School Students of St. Mary's Academy of Hagonoy

The study utilized a test assessing students' anxiety level. This test was called Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale which was created by Horwitz in 1986. According to the FLCAS, language anxiety has three levels: high, medium, and low. It consists of 33 items indicative of language anxiety. Students who scored 33 to 75 showed a low level of anxiety, those with 76 to 119 displayed a medium level of anxiety, and 120 points and above reflected a high intensity anxiety.

Based on the results of the test, 151 (84%) out of 180 respondents had a medium level of anxiety. On the other hand, 24 respondents (13%) had a high level, and five respondents (3%) had a low level of anxiety.

Problem # 2: Level of academic achievement of senior high school students

Table-6: Level of Academic Achievement of Senior High School Students of St. Mary's Academy of Hagonoy

Academic Performance	Frequency	Percentage
90 – 100 (Outstanding)	87	49.0
85 – 89 (Very Satisfactory)	82	44.4
80 – 84 (Satisfactory)	10	6.0
75 – 79 (Fairly Satisfactory)	1	0.6
Below 75 (Did not meet Expectation)	0	0.0
Total	**180**	**100.0**

The level of academic achievement of senior high school students of St. Mary's Academy of Hagonoy was represented by the General Weighted Average (GWA) in the third grading period for the school year 2017-2018.

The GWA included twelve components for grade 11 students: Practical Research 1, Reading and Writing Skills, Filipino sa Piling Larangan, Statistics and Probability, Christian Living, Physical Education and Health, Pagbasa at Pagsulat Tungo sa Pananaliksik, Physical Science/Disaster Readiness and Risk Reduction, the two specialized subjects for each strand, extra-curricular and conduct grade. For grade 12 level, the GWA included Christian Living, General Biology, Physics, Immersion, Capstone Research, Contemporary Arts, Entrepreneurship, Personal Development, extra-curricular and conducted grade. The GWA ranging

from 90-100 was labeled outstanding; 85-89 was labeled very satisfactory; 80-84, satisfactory; 75-79, fairly satisfactory; and, 75 and below labeled with did not meet expectation. A total of 180 students participated in the study. Eighty-seven (49%) of the students had a General Weighted Average of 90-100 (outstanding). Eighty-two (44.4%) of the respondents got 85-89 (very satisfactory). Ten respondents or 6% of the total number of participants had a GWA of 80-84 (satisfactory), and only one participant or 0.6% got an average of 75-79 (fairly satisfactory). These grades meant that the most number of students performed outstandingly in their academic subjects.

Problem # 3: Effect of the level of anxiety on the academic achievement of senior high school students.

Table-7: Regression analysis of Classroom anxiety on Academic Performance

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	90.656	2.724		33.283	0
Communication anxiety	-0.607	0.771	-0.103	-0.787	0.433
Fear of Negative Evaluation	0.325	0.494	0.088	0.657	0.513
Test anxiety	-0.639	0.753	-0.109	-0.849	0.398
Anxiety of English classes	0.979	0.916	0.144	1.069	0.288
R-squared = .018					
F-value = .446					
p-value = .775					
alpha = 0.05					

Based on the regression analysis performed, communication anxiety got a significance level of 0.433, fear of negative evaluation; 0.513, test anxiety; 0.398, and anxiety of English classes; 0.288. All of the given divisions of English language anxiety exceeded the 0.05 level of significance which indicates that none of these divisions predict the academic achievement of senior high school students. The p-value (.775) was greater than the alpha level (0.05). This means that English language anxiety had no significant effect on academic achievement. The two variables were not related, therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Problem # 4: Intervention programs developed to address the level of anxiety of students

Cooperative Learning
Working in groups motivates students to participate more in classroom discussions. They find it easier to speak up when they have the emotional support that they need (Campbell, 1998). This is called Cooperative Learning.

According to Nagahashi (2007), Japanese children were taught the importance of cooperative learning the moment they start formal education. It has elements which include the following:
1. Positive Interdependence - A group should have a common goal, and the participation of each member is essential to the group's success.
2. Face-to-face Interactions – Each member is expected to teach other members and learn from them at the same time.
3. Individual and Group Accountability – The group divides the tasks to individual ones, and each member is given a specific task.
4. Group Processing – This involves students' reflections on the group's experiences.

To test the effectiveness of Cooperative Learning in reducing or eliminating foreign language anxiety, Nagahashi (2007) implemented the intervention in his classes. He also administered Foreign Language Anxiety Scale by Horwitz (1986) to assess the effectiveness of cooperative learning.

Another post-intervention questionnaire was completed by the subjects of the study.

The results of the study showed that cooperative learning could help reduce and eliminate the foreign language anxiety among students. Communication apprehension, specifically, can be reduced by giving students an opportunity to share their thoughts in smaller groups that would not intimidate them.

Thus, the strategy cooperative learning can be used by classroom teachers to help reduce foreign language anxiety and provide more opportunities for students who wish to participate more in classroom discussions.

Other Strategies
Aside from cooperative learning technique, the following strategies by Tsiplakides (2009) may also be used to diminish English language anxiety among Filipino students:
1. Providing indirect, rather than direct correction
One of the reasons students are afraid to communicate in the English language is because they are afraid of being corrected and criticized, and looking silly in front of people. Because of this, Tsiplakides & Areti (2009) suggested providing prompts and questions instead of directly correcting the students' mistakes to avoid a breakdown in communication.

2. Accepting the need for self-worth protection
The things that could threaten the students' social image should be avoided. This includes keeping the test scores and other assessments private. Announcing the scores to the whole class may trigger the students' test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation which may negatively affect classroom learning.

3. Provision of praise
According to Tsiplakides & Areti (2009), giving praises to students in front of the class for a minor accomplishment had a negative effect on students because it gives the students the idea that the teacher had little confidence in them. So instead of using verbal

cues to praise students, non-verbal cues such as positive head movement should be used.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study determined if the English language anxiety level of senior high school students has a significant effect on their academic achievement. Utilizing a quantitative research design, the study adapted a descriptive correlational study to determine this relationship. English language anxiety was assessed using a standardized test called Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. On the other hand, academic achievement was represented by the students' General Weighted Average in the third quarter of school year 2017-2018.

Summary of Findings

Regarding the first research question, the result of the study showed that majority of the senior high school students of St. Mary's Academy of Hagonoy has a medium level of English language anxiety. Out of the 180 respondents, 151 (84%) obtained the said result. 24% of the respondents had a high level, and 3% had a low level of English language anxiety. As revealed by the result of the study, English language anxiety existed among senior high school students of St. Mary's Academy of Hagonoy. In the study of Tang in 2005 and Azhar & Iqbal in 2010, those who were reported to have moderate/medium to high level of language anxiety showed lower academic achievement than those who had a low level of language anxiety. This was similar to what Stephen D. Krashen stated about affective filter hypothesis that as the language anxiety increases, the academic achievement decreases. High level of anxiety can keep students from participating in classroom activities, especially in subjects that use English as the medium of communication. This may cause the students to lose their self-confidence and motivation for learning.

The results of the mean of each question from FLCAS revealed that fear of negative evaluation was the greatest factor in the English language anxiety of senior high school students. The items "I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am", "I always feel that the other students speak the language better than I do", and "I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class" got the highest means. This might be because Filipinos tend to be more meticulous when it comes to the English language than the Filipino language.

The second research question wanted to find out the level of academic achievement of the respondents. Based on the result of the study, 49% or 87 out of 180 respondents had the high academic achievement. This meant that their General Weighted Average in the third quarter of the school year 2017-2018 ranges from 90%-100%. On the other hand, 44.4% of the respondents got a GWA of 85-89 which

was under the Very Satisfactory category. 6% of the respondents got 80-84 (Satisfactory), and only one respondent (0.6%) got 75-79. It could be concluded from the result that majority of the senior high school students had a high academic achievement.

The third question sought to answer if the level of English language anxiety among senior high school students had a significant effect on their academic achievement. Through the use of correlation and regression analysis between the two variables, the result of the study showed that the level of English language anxiety had no significant effect on the academic achievement of senior high school students of St. Mary's Academy of Hagonoy. Therefore, the null hypothesis of the study is accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

Language anxiety, as defined earlier in the study, can be compared to a filter. According to the affective filter hypothesis, the theory that this study attempted to test, language anxiety can hinder the learning process, which affects the academic achievement or performance of students. Stephen D. Krashen, the proponent of affective filter hypothesis, claimed that the higher the affective filter, the lower the academic achievement of an individual and vice versa.

Thus, the present study was conducted to test the said theory. The study has two variables: the independent variable is the English language anxiety of senior high school students, and the dependent variable is the academic achievement. To get the level of English language anxiety, a standardized test by Horwitz (1986) was utilized. The test is called Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale which was used by previous researchers to measure language anxiety such as Lin, Su, Wang, & Tsai (2015), Razak (2017), Amiri & Ghonsooly (2013), etc. The academic achievement, on the other hand, was represented by the General Weighted Average of the senior high school students in the third grading of the school year 2017-2018. The two variables were correlated to determine if the independent variable had a significant effect on the dependent variable.

Based on the results and findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:
1. English language anxiety existed among senior high school students of St. Mary's Academy of Hagonoy but only to a moderate level. Only a few of the students experienced severe and low anxiety.
2. The main causes of the senior high school's language anxiety were fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. These students did not want to speak in front of the class in fear of being judged by their teachers and classmates should they commit grammatical errors. Also, the thought of them taking a test with the English language as the medium of instruction worried them, thinking that they could fail to comprehend the content

of the test which would result to failing the examination.

3. The senior high school students had high academic achievement in the third quarter of school year 2017-2018. This means that they performed well in all of their subjects and extra-curricular activities.

4. None of the divisions of English language anxiety (fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, communication apprehension and anxiety of English classes) predicted the students' academic achievement. Thus, the level of English language anxiety among senior high school students did not exert any significant effect on their academic achievement. This implied that the affective filter hypothesis by Stephen D. Krashen might not be applicable in all classroom situations. The increase and decrease of the academic achievement did not solely depend on English language anxiety and might be caused by many other factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Students should be encouraged to continue the usage of foreign languages particularly English, in most of the subjects in school considering the medium scale of anxiety experienced by students. It can prove beneficial to the students should they build confidence and distress themselves from anxiety as they enhance their communicative facility of the English language.

2. English as a medium of instruction and communication in the classroom should continue to be given priority in the hope of harnessing the mastery of a second language among Filipino students.

3. Cooperative Learning Technique can be used by classroom teachers to promote more participation in the classroom. This technique reduces the intimidation experienced by students when asked to share their thoughts during classroom discussions. Other strategies to reduce language anxieties may also be used such as providing indirect corrections, accepting the need for self-worth protection, and provision of praise.

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